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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON

2 OCT 1963

The Honorable John A. McCone
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear John:

The National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) has developed into one of our most important and productive national intelligence assets. I believe that recent organizational changes, as agreed between you and the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, have significantly improved the effectiveness of the NPIC. As you know, we have consolidated the three military detachments at the Center and have designated certain military personnel to key staff positions. These actions have given the Director, NPIC, assets and authority commensurate with the mission assigned to him by NSCID No. 8, and have significantly enhanced his capability to respond more rapidly to our peacetime requirements. In my opinion it is necessary that we now jointly address ourselves to the wartime role of NPIC and to the problem of providing for a smooth transition of control to the Department of Defense in the event of hostilities.

In accordance with the provisions of NSCID No. 8, and in light of the important role that NPIC would play under such a contingency, I deem it essential that a coordinated plan be developed which will provide for the transfer of NPIC administration to DOD at a time short of the commencement of actual hostilities. Absorption of NPIC into the Defense structure at some specific time prior to hostilities would provide the Joint Chiefs of Staff with the necessary flexibility and control required to meet critical military needs. In my judgment, such transfer should be made not later than a national declaration of Defense Condition 2. This Condition dictates a readiness posture where certain military deployments and selected civil actions may be necessary and where outside resources are made available to the commands.

Until such time as we can reach mutual understanding and agreement on this matter, optimum military planning in this area cannot be accomplished. Therefore, I suggest that our representatives convene at an early date for the purpose of developing a plan to cover the transitional phase outlined above and to resolve any of the administrative and operational problems that such transfer may entail. I am designating the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, as my representative in the accomplishment of this planning.

Sincerely,

(EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FILE)

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